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# FOOD AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT (FED) PROGRAM FOR LIBERIA

**QUARTERLY REPORT: JANUARY- MARCH 2014**



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**Authors:** Sandra Okoed and Nicholas Parkinson

**Photo Caption:** A member of the United Farmers Association in Montserrado County stresses a point about the group's finances. The 13 member vegetable farming group received a loan through FED's access to finance program and partner Liberian Entrepreneurial Asset Development (LEAD). Each farmer used the loan to purchase agro inputs and pay laborers to help them on their fields.

## **DISCLAIMER**

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

## ACRONYMS

ACE	Africa Cost to Europe
AEDE	Agency for Economic Development and Empowerment
APDRA	Association Pisciculture et Development Rural en Afrique
AU IBAR	African Union's Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources
AYP	Advancing Youth Project
AWEP	African Women Entrepreneurship Program
BSTVSE	Bureau of Science, Technical, Vocational and Special Education
BWI	Booker Washington Institute
CARI	Center of Agriculture Research Institute
CBF	County Based Facilitator
CoE	Center of Excellence
CYNP	Community Youth Network Program
CVC	Cassava Value Chain
DAI	Development Alternatives, Inc.
DCOP	Deputy Chief of Party
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ED	Enterprise Development
EMMP	Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan
EO	Extension Officer
FED	Food and Enterprise Development
FTF	Farmer to Farmer
FtF	Feed the Future
FUN	Farmer Union Network
GBCC	Grand Bassa County Community College
GCAP	Green Coast Agricultural Program
GPS	Global Positioning Systems
IFDC	International Fertilizer Developmental Center
IITA	International Institute for Tropical Agriculture
IP	Implementing Partner
IQC	Indefinite Quantity Contract
LABEE IPG	Liberia Agriculture Business Enabling Environment Inter-Agency Policy Group
LAUNCH	Liberia Agriculture, Upgrading Nutrition & Child Health
LCCC	Lofa County Community College
LIFE	Livelihood Improvement for Farming Enterprises

USAID Food and Enterprise Development Program for Liberia  
Quarterly Report, January - March 2014

LMEP	Liberia Monitoring and Evaluation Program
LREC	Liberia Renaissance Education Complex
MFI	Micro Finance Institution
MIS	Market Information Systems
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoCI	Ministry of Commerce and Industry
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
NAD	National Diploma in Agriculture
NCCC	Nimba County Community College
NGW	New General Women
NIC	National Investment Commission
NV	National Volunteer
PIDS	Performance Indicator Database System
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PUA	Peri-Urban Agriculture
R&RF	Rights & Rice Foundation
RFTOP	Requests for task order proposals
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
STTA	Short Term Technical Assistant
SWAT	Supporting West Africa Trading
TAMIS	Technical Administrative Management Information System
TVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
UDP	Urea Deep Placement
UL	University of Liberia
UMU	United Methodist University
USADF	United States African Development Foundation
VET GOV	Veterinary Governance in Africa
WAAPP	West Africa Agriculture Productivity Program
WAFP	West Africa Fertilizer Project
WASP	West Africa Seed Project
WFP	World Food Program

## Table of Contents

<b>ACRONYMS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Background.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Component One: Increase agricultural productivity and profitability .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Task 1 Value Chain Development .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Task 1 A. Increased agricultural productivity and profitability of the rice value chain.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Task 1B: Increased production and profitability of the cassava value chain .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Task 1C: Increased production and profitability of the goat value chain .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Task 1D: Increased productivity and profitability of the vegetable value chain .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Subtask 1.1: Special Studies and MoA Data Collection Systems Development .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Subtask 1.2: Improve access to agriculture inputs.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Subtask 1.3: Agricultural Extension Support .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Component Two: Stimulate Private Sector Growth and Investment.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Task 2: Enabling Policy Environment for Private Sector Growth.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Subtask 2.1: Access to Credit and Business Development Services .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Component Three: Build local technical and managerial human resource capability .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Task 3.0 Develop Existing Vocational Centers into Centers of Excellence .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Task 3.1 Enterprise Service Centers .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Component Four: Cross-cutting Activities .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Task 4.1 Gender .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Task 4.2 Youth.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Task 4.3: Nutrition .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Task 4.4. Coordination with Partners .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Task 4.5 Environmental Compliance .....</b>	<b>46</b>

## List of Tables and Figures

	Table of Tables
Table 1	Rice production from October 2013 to March 2014.
Table 2	Rice sales from October 2013 to March 2014.
Table 3	Lowland rice production groups FY14.
Table 4	Lowland rice production sites and land size.
Table 5	Upland rice production groups FY14.
Table 6	Upland rice production sites and land size.
Table 7	Number of beneficiaries in rice trainings as of Q2 FY14.
Table 8	Cassava nursery progress as of Q2 FY14.
Table 9	Harvest and sales data FY12 production.
Table 10	Breakdown of cassava production clusters in FY14.
Table 11	Distribution of processors and collection centers across the counties as of Q2 FY14.
Table 12	Goat farmer statistics as of Q2 FY14.
Table 13	Goat sales for Q2 FY14.
Table 14	Vegetable farmers recruited in FY14.
Table 15	Vegetable cluster sales as of Q2 FY14.
Table 16	VSLA group results for Q2 FY14.
Table 17	VSLA ag-loans versus non ag-loans as of Q2 FY14.
Table 18	Nutritional messaging in USAID FED training as of Q2 FY14.

	<b>Table of Figures</b>
Fig. 1	Payee Rice Processing Center, Nimba County.
Fig. 2	CARI Quarantine Facility at CARI, Bong County.
Fig. 3	Installation of drip irrigation (left) at Gbofella, Margibi Cluster and the distribution of a motorized pump at Low Cost Village, Bensonville.
Fig. 4	Training with PUA clusters in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County in March 2014 on construction and use of solar dryers.
Fig. 5	Trader Support event at Red Light Market near Monrovia.
Fig. 6	John Dewalt from the Low Cost Vegetable Cluster redeems his voucher for seeds and inputs.
Fig. 7	Kormassah Boi, a widowed peanut farmer.
Fig. 8	Johnson Harris stands next to a laborer he pays to harvest peppers.
Fig. 9	Study room (left) and library shown here with textbooks and furniture at the LCCC.
Fig. 10	Drip irrigation demonstration at BWI.
Fig. 11	The arid cassava field at KRTTI.
Fig. 12	The Future Farmers Association (FFA) leadership team planning the installation event.
Fig. 13	From left to right: Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports, Advancing Youth Project, USAID FED, USAID Deputy Mission Director, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Student Gardener.

## Background

The USAID Food and Enterprise Development (FED) Program for Liberia is a USAID-funded development program that was launched in September 2011. USAID FED uses an all-inclusive strategy incorporating MSME farmers, processors, suppliers, women and youth while partnering with the government of Liberia and local civil societies to achieve food security.

The goal of USAID FED is to increase food availability, utilization, and accessibility by building an indigenous incentive structure that assists agricultural stakeholders in adopting commercial approaches.

This incentive structure will be built upon:

- Improved technology for productivity and profitability
- Expanded and modernized input supply and extension systems
- Commercial production, marketing, and processing
- Enterprise services
- Workforce development

USAID FED works with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), civil societies and the private sector in providing communities access to agricultural inputs (including improved seeds), extension services, nutritious food products, processing services, market information, transportation, credit, agro-business education, training, and enterprise services.

In five years, USAID FED's thrust to expand market linkages is expected to lead to substantial increases in income and job opportunities. FED aims to significantly boost the production, processing, marketing and nutritional utilization of rice, cassava and vegetables, and to enhance the productivity of goat farming in the counties covered by the program.

These initiatives are being carried out in the counties of Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Bassa, Montserrado, and Margibi. USAID FED focused on these counties because they are situated along regional development corridors that are crucial in promoting intra and inter-county commerce. These growth corridors are expected to improve food availability and access for all Liberians.

USAID FED's methodology is market-led and value chain-driven; it is committed to developing indigenous capacity building, with a specific focus on Liberia's women and youth.

USAID FED's approach is collaborative and catalytic. It is driven by the goals and objectives of our partner clients. It aims to: increase incomes of rural households and create new employment and livelihood opportunities for Liberians; to improve access to food and household dietary diversity scores of food-insecure Liberians; and to promote the use of improved inputs, better farming practices, and technologies that boost agricultural productivity.

USAID FED is implemented by five partners: Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI), Winrock International, International Fertilizer Developmental Center (IFDC), Louisiana State University (LSU), and The Cadmus Group.



## Executive Summary

A significant highlight during this reporting period was the increased collaboration between Fabrar Liberia, Inc. and USAID FED to support a major FY14 work plan initiative, the development of an industrial rice mill that aims to initially process approximately 5,300 metric tons of grain rice in its first year of operation (June 2014-May 2015). USAID FED has issued the purchase order for the milling equipment, which will be the first industrial rice mill in Liberia and is expected to be delivered in June 2014. The renovation of Fabrar's warehouse is on track and is expected to be completed in Q3 of FY14. This warehouse will increase Fabrar's capacity to store milled rice by 1000 MT with proper ventilation and protection from pests, molds, fungus and mildews thereby preventing quality deterioration.

USAID FED initiated the first market linkages meeting between Fabrar Liberia, Inc. and over 30 farmers from Fuamah Multipurpose Cooperative Society in Bong Mines. Topics discussed included a consistent year round market for farmers, collection at the farm gate by Fabrar, cash payments for rice upon purchase, forward purchasing opportunities, and the availability of locally processed rice which farmers can purchase at lower prices. As a result, Fabrar has proposed \$19 USD for 50kg of paddy. The farmers requested time to discuss this development. USAID FED expects to hear back from the farmers during the first week of April.

During this reporting period, USAID FED conducted two trader support activities with Lead Farmers and Traders from Montserrado, Margibi, Nimba and Grand Bassa counties. The activity facilitated the establishment of market linkages between PUA clusters and identified markets for the sales of high value vegetables. During the events, Lead Farmers negotiated with the Liberian catering firm ROSNA on quality, quantity, prices, procedures, schedules and the consistency expected for a contractual agreement. At the end of the event, both sides agreed to enter into a purchasing contract to formalize the partnership.

USAID FED completed the construction of the goat quarantine facility located at the Center of Agriculture Research Institute (CARI). The facility has the capacity to shelter 500 animals. USDA partner Land O'Lakes (LOL) has planned the first shipment of goats to arrive in May. USAID FED plans to inaugurate the facility in April with the U.S. Ambassador.

Throughout Q2, USAID FED, and STTAs Dr. Bradley Leger and Cristina Caltagirone, participated in numerous meetings with the MoE's Director of Technical Vocational Education and Training, Saku Dukuly, to provide technical assistance to help move forward the process of approving the National Diploma for Agriculture (NDA) curriculum. In March, USAID FED sponsored a one-day NDA curriculum review workshop to revise the NDA structure. Workshop participants analyzed the courses and the division between practical activities and theoretical content. In addition, faculty from the NCCC presented the results from the six courses they piloted during the first semester of 2013-14. A milestone in this reporting period was achieved with the acceptance of the MoE of 30 courses to be rolled out in two Academic Years (AY). Seven courses will be rolled out in the first semester AY 14-15, to start in September.

The project procured and started the distribution and installation of 360 drip irrigation kits that are expected to improve efficiency of water utilization, especially during the dry season contributing to

better yields. The drip irrigation kits were purchased from local input supplier Gro-Green, and will be installed on all of USAID FED supported vegetable farms for FY14.

USAID FED, in collaboration with CARI and the Pan-African rice research organization Africa Rice, kicked off a 10-day certification training for 31 people (24 male, 7 female) on quality seed assurance at CARI facilities in Bong County. The new seed inspectors learned land preparation, fertilization and application, seed processing and seed germination techniques. They are expected to apply these skills when working with local rice farmers in processing seed in Bong, Nimba and Grand Bassa counties. USAID FED is in the process of working on the administrative aspects of this arrangement.

During the period, USAID FED and Advancing Youth Project (AYP) assigned 28 National Agriculture Volunteers to mentor 148 AYP agriculture youth clubs at 148 schools in Bong, Margibi, Nimba, Lofa and Montserrado counties. AYP's youth clubs consist of adult learners who have gone back to school. Gardeners at the 148 selected sites have completed clearing land, de-stumping, nursery preparation, and field layout for cassava and vegetable production.

USAID FED initiated the PUA dry season voucher activity during the quarter. The program linked input supply companies to district level agro dealers who deliver the voucher redemption phase of the program. The program includes training agro dealers on product knowledge, as well as better ways of doing business. The sale of inputs provides the agro dealers incentives to meet farmers in their villages, which then gives both parties the opportunity to be introduced, allowing for a continuing business relationship thereafter.

*Erratum:*

*FED reported in its February monthly report on page 9, "In Lofa county, the 36 FY13 farmer group demonstration plots have finished harvesting a total of 44 MT of rice from approximately 46.5 ha of land." The correct report is, "In Lofa county, the 36 FY13 farmer group demonstration plots have harvested rice from approximately 46.5 ha of land. Of the total harvest, 44MT have already been threshed, dried and bagged; an unknown quantity still needs to be threshed."*

## Component One: Increase agricultural productivity and profitability

### Task 1 Value Chain Development

#### Task 1 A. Increased agricultural productivity and profitability of the rice value chain

##### (A) FY13 Crop production and sales<sup>1</sup>:

During the period October 2013 to March 2014, a total of 5,525 MT (Table 1) of rice was harvested across the 4 counties. A total of 795.59 MT of FY14 crop was sold at a cumulative value of \$327,706.40 USD (Table 2) during the first 6 months of FY14.

Table 1: Rice production from October 2013 to March 2014.

County	# of Ha Planted	# of Ha harvested*	Vol Harvested Q1 (MT)	Vol Harvested Q2 (MT)	Cumulative Harvest (MT)
Lofa	54.90	67.68	120.26	156.10	276.36
Nimba	48.90	87.00	156.55	185.20	341.75
Bong	1,972.10	1,972.10	4,319.89	484.20	4,804.09
Grand Bassa	17.10	28.70	46.10	57.20	103.30
	<b>2,093.00</b>	<b>2,155.48</b>	<b>4,642.80</b>	<b>882.70</b>	<b>5,525.50</b>

\*Additional Ha includes individual farmers who undertook adaptive production outside the group farms.

Table 2: Rice sales from October 2013 to March 2014.

County	Sales Volume sold as reported (MT)	Value of sales (US\$) as of March 2014	Inventory Threshed and Bagged (MT)	Value of Inventory(US\$)
Lofa	6.10	3,757.00	35.8	14,320.00
Nimba	68.23	35,444.00	124.5	49,800.00
Bong	720.61	288,245.40	176.5	70,600.00
Grand Bassa	0.65	260.00	3.53	1,412.00
	<b>795.59</b>	<b>327,706.40</b>	<b>340.33</b>	<b>136,132.00</b>

## (B) FY14 Lowland Rice Production Expansion

### **Farmer mobilization and recruitment:**

By the end of the reporting period, USAID FED mobilized and recruited a total of 10,353 lowland farmers represented in 195 groups in Lofa, Nimba, Bong and Grand Bassa counties. This is against a FY14 target of 8,972 farmers (Table 3).

Table 3: Lowland rice production groups FY14.

FY14 Lowland Farming Groups Recruitment by County			
County	# Groups Recruited	# of Farmers	FY14 Targets
Lofa	41	2,494	2,058
Nimba	75	4,425	4,434
Bong	58	3,084	2,130
Grand Bassa	14	350	350
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>10,353</b>	<b>8,972</b>

**Site selection and land preparation:**

USAID FED selected 188 lowland sites in Lofa, Nimba, Bong and Grand Bassa counties. This is against a target of 158 anticipated sites for FY14. During the reporting period, a total of 367 ha were cleared against a total of 1,356 ha for FY14 (Table 4). Clearing the rest of the area is expected to be completed in May 2014.

Table 4: Lowland rice production sites and land size.

<b>FY14 Lowland Farming Sites and Field Preparation by County</b>				
<b>County</b>	<b># Target Lowland Sites</b>	<b># Lowland Sites Identified</b>	<b># Hectares Targeted</b>	<b># Hectares Cleared</b>
Lofa	40	41	150	38
Nimba	72	75	405	74
Bong	32	58	757	250
Grand Bassa	14	14	44	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>1,356</b>	<b>367</b>

**(C) FY14 Upland Rice Productivity Improvement****Farmer mobilization and recruitment:**

By the end of the reporting period, USAID FED mobilized and recruited a total of 7,285 upland farmers representing 202 groups in Lofa, Nimba, Bong and Grand Bassa counties. This is against a FY14 anticipated target of 10,177 farmers (Table 5). Recruitment is expected to be completed end of April 2014.

Table 5: Upland rice production groups FY14.

<b>FY14 Upland Farming Groups Recruiting by County</b>			
<b>County</b>	<b># Groups Recruited</b>	<b># of Farmers</b>	<b>FY14 Targets</b>
Lofa	33	1995	3,600
Nimba	37	2,205	2,385
Bong	85	2,560	3,667
Grand Bassa	51	525	525
<b>Total</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>7,285</b>	<b>10,177</b>

**Site selection and land preparation:**

Of the targeted 184 sites in FY14, the program identified and selected 206 upland rice farming sites in Lofa, Nimba, and Bong and Grand Bassa counties. Farmers have already cleared 1,517 ha of the total 1863.2 ha for FY14 (Table 6).

Table 6: Upland rice production sites and land size.

<b>FY14 Upland Farming Sites and Field Preparation by County</b>				
<b>County</b>	<b># Target Upland Sites</b>	<b># Upland Sites Identified</b>	<b># Hectares Targeted</b>	<b># Hectares Cleared</b>
Lofa	65	33	129	24.4
Nimba	43	37	90.2	43.66
Bong	66	85	1600	1,280
Grand Bassa	10	51	44	169
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>1,863.2</b>	<b>1,517</b>

**Increasing Productivity and Building Capacity**

(See Table 7)

**ToT Workshop on rice production best practices and water management, Bong County**

USAID FED conducted a Training of Trainers (ToT) with 54 participants (47 male, 7 female) comprising of 35 Extension Officers and County Based Facilitators (CBF), 19 Rice Extension Aides from the Lofa, Nimba, Bong and Grand Bassa counties and Extension Staff from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). The ToT sought to teach farmers new production methods, and planting, maintenance and processing techniques, while the water management aspect taught participants about the distribution of water control in the paddy field.

**ToT Workshop on rice production best practices for lowland farmers, Nimba County**

USAID FED conducted a ToT for 72 Lead Farmers (64 male, 8 female) in Ganta, Nimba County, to improve the technical skills of Lead Farmers who in turn are responsible for coaching farmer groups on improved rice production technologies promoted by USAID FED.

**ToT Workshop on rice production best practices for lowland farmers, Bong County**

USAID FED conducted a ToT for 31 Lead Farmers (29 male, 2 female) and 17 local NGO staff in Gbarnga, Bong county on rice production best practices and water management. The participants will then assist USAID FED's extension delivery to over 10,000 farmers that will be supported by USAID FED in applying improved lowland rice production technologies.

**Water management control structures training workshop, Bong County**

USAID FED conducted a workshop for 51 farmers, four Extension Officers (40 male, 15 female) from 12 rice producing communities where USAID FED will construct and install or rehabilitate wooden irrigation spillways. These irrigation infrastructures are more advanced, permanent and constructed to allow year-round cultivation of rice in areas where there is continuous access to water supply, as opposed to the bunds and canals that are constructed in rain-fed areas. Workshop participants learned how to construct and manage irrigation spillways to control flooding by draining rice paddy fields, and to enable supply of water to the plants in optimal amounts during the dry season. Participants came from Bong, Lofa and Nimba and Grand Bassa counties.

**ToT Workshop on rice production best practices for lowland farmers, Lofa County**

USAID FED conducted a ToT for 34 (33 male, 1 female) participants comprised of Lead Farmers and NGO staff on rice production best practices, and water management. Workshop participants received training on best practices in rice farming and are expected to coach the members of their groups on improved rice production technologies that they learned from the ToT. In addition, USAID FED conducted training for 49 upland rice Lead Farmers (41 male, 8 female) from Lofa and Bong counties who participated in the training on Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM).

**ToT Workshop on rice production best practices for upland and lowland farmers, Grand Bassa County**

USAID FED conducted a ToT for 26 upland and lowland Lead Farmers (24 male, 2 female) and local NGO staff on rice production best practices and ISFM. Participants learned technical skills associated with rice production and soil fertility management. They are expected to transfer these skills to farmers in their groups.

**Business management and financial record keeping for rice processing center farmers, Bong County**

USAID FED conducted training for 21 participants (17 male, 4 female) on business management and financial record keeping. Training topics included management, leadership and SWOT analysis. Participants belonged to groups involved in the rice business hubs.

*Table 7: Number of beneficiaries in rice trainings as of Q2 FY14.*

<b>Training Workshops</b>	<b># of trainees</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Rice production best practices for lowland farmers, Nimba	72	64	8
Rice production best practices for lowland farmers, Bong	31	29	2
Water Management Control Structures	55	40	15
Rice production best practices for lowland farmers, Lofa	34	33	1
Rice production best practices for upland/lowland farmers, Grand Bassa	26	24	2
Business Management and Financial Record Keeping for Processing Center Farmers	21	17	4

	239	207	32
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### **Advanced Water Management Infrastructure**

During this reporting period, USAID FED contracted an engineering firm to construct and install 12 water control spillways in Lofa, Nimba, and Bong counties. The firm started collecting wooden beams and other local materials needed for the spillway construction in four locations in Lofa Kolahum (Karhenjala), Foya (Sardu Passia), Voinjama (Kugbema), and Foya (Kpormu Road).

### **Enterprise Development: Rice Processing**

#### **Community Rice Business Hubs**

In Nimba county, 95 percent of the processing sites in Boweh, Payee and Doumpa have been completed, including the painting of the building. The delivery of milling equipment will be in place by the end of April, and farmers will begin training on rice processing.

In Bong county, the rice business hub in Garmue II is almost complete, pending the roof and finishing details. The wall construction on the other two sites in Bong Mines is 50 percent complete.

In Lofa county, the three rice processing sites (David Selma Town, Sarkonnedu, and Foya) have foundations and drying floors.

In Grand Bassa county, the processing site in Kpelleh has a foundation and wall construction has begun.

#### **Market linkage activities**

USAID FED initiated the first market linkages meeting between Fabrar Liberia and over 30 farmers from Fuamah Multipurpose Cooperative Society in Bong Mines. Topics discussed included a consistent year round market for farmers, collection at the farm gate by Fabrar, cash payments for rice upon purchase, forward purchasing opportunities, and the availability of locally processed rice which farmers can purchase at lower prices.

During this meeting, Fabrar offered an initial \$18 USD for 50kg of paddy rice while the farmers appealed for \$20 USD for 50kg of paddy. With FED's facilitation, Fabrar's Board of Directors, has agreed to increase their price to \$ 19 USD for 50kg of paddy. The farmers requested time to discuss the new offer, and will provide an answer in April.



Figure 1: Payee Processing Center, Nimba County.

USAID FED initiated meetings with representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) concerning the sale of Liberian rice under the 25 percent local procurement initiative sponsored by the GOL. Peewee Reed, Director of MoCI's MSME Division, participated in the meeting and informed the group that the GoL procures 70,000 50-kg bags of rice every year for distribution to its employees. He has verbally



committed to proposing to the MoCI Minister to procure its requirements for the coming year from local producers and processors.

## **Task 1B: Increased production and profitability of the cassava value chain**

### **Production, Harvests and Sales**

#### **Establishment and management of 11 improved varieties from IITA**

During the reporting period, USAID FED initiated the procurement of 44,000 cuttings of 11 improved varieties of cassava from the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Nigeria. These cuttings will be imported through CARI. The cuttings will be screened at CARI upon entry for adaptability to local stresses, pests and diseases for one season during April. Varieties that are found to have good adaptability to local conditions will be field tested at USAID FED-supported sites.

#### **Cassava Nursery Establishment:**

In the quarter, USAID FED selected 40 sites in Nimba, Grand Bassa, Bong and Lofa counties to establish a network of 40 commercial nursery farms (Table 8). Brushing and clearing have already started. Land preparation and planting are expected to be completed in Q3 of FY14. The nurseries are expected to boost availability of improved planting material for the 10,455 cassava farmers.

*Table 8: Cassava nursery progress as of Q2 FY14.*

Activity Description	Cassava Value Chain FY14 Targets	Achievements per County (January - March)				Achievement January - March
		Nimba	Grand Bassa	Bong	Lofa	
Site selection	40 sites	16	12	8	4	40
Brushing and clearing	60ha	24 ha	18 ha	7.5 ha	0	49.5 ha
Land preparation	60ha	0	0	0	0	0
Planting	60ha	0	0	0	0	0

#### **Cassava Sales**

A total of 59 bags of raw cassava planted during FY12 implementation period were harvested from demonstration sites in Grand Bassa, Lofa and Bong counties. After processing, farmers sold 19.5 bags of *gari* on the market at \$220 USD (Table 9). Increased harvesting and sales of the cassava planted during FY13 will begin in June 2014 and will continue through September 2014 and is expected to hit a cumulative value of US \$196,000.

Table 9: Harvest and sales data FY12 production.

Activity Description	Cassava Value Chain FY14 Targets	Achievements by County (January - March)				Achievement January - March
		Nimba	Grand Bassa	Bong	Lofa	
Volume of cassava harvested (MT)	5000	0	10.5	39	9.5	59
Volume of cassava product sold (MT)	2000	0	3.5	13	3	19.5
Value of sales (US\$)	196,000	0	39.00	146	35.00	220.00

\* One bag is 50 kg.

### Establishment of cassava production clusters

USAID FED completed the site selection and recruitment of an estimated 12,000 farmers in Grand Bassa, Nimba, Bong and Lofa counties. USAID FED also signed MoUs with *kuu* leaders located in 40 cluster communities. Approximately 21 percent or 447.5 ha, have been prepared for the upcoming cassava season of the program's FY14 target of 2,100 ha (Table 10). Planting on mounds and ridges is the main improved technology being introduced. At the end of the quarter, only 30ha were under improved technology. The rest of the 2,310 ha will be under improved technology by the end of FY14 Q3.

Table 10: Breakdown of cassava production clusters in FY14.

Activity Description	Cassava Value Chain FY14 Targets	Achievements per County (January - March)				Achievement January - March
		Nimba	Grand Bassa	Bong	Lofa	
Recruitment (# of farmers)	12000	4800	3600	2400	1200	12,000
Land Agreements (signed MoUs)	95	32	24	16	8	80
Land Preparation (ha)	2152	78	283	75	11	447.4
Demonstration Farm Establishment (sites)	600	0	20	0	11	31
New Area under improved technology (ha)	2310	0	30	0	0	30

## Enterprise Development in the Cassava Value Chain

### Support 15 cassava processing enterprises to achieve profitable operation

During the reporting period, USAID FED identified 15 processing enterprises in Grand Bassa, Nimba, Bong and Lofa counties to facilitate processing and enhance product development. Through a cost sharing mechanism in the third quarter, USAID FED will provide equipment and a well for six enterprises and provide technical support for nine enterprises. Each enterprise is expected to provide land and the structure where processing equipment will be established (Table 11).

Table 11: Distribution of processors and collection centers across the counties as of Q2 FY14.

Activity Description	FY14 Targets	Achievements per County (January - March)				Achievement January – March
		Nimba	Grand Bassa	Bong	Lofa	
Number of processors selected	17	6	5	3	1	15
Processing plants selected for upgrading/cost sharing	6	2	2	1	1	6
Processing plants selected for technical backstopping	11	4	3	2	0	9

### Market linkage activities

During this period, USAID FED and partner Dutch aid organization, ZOA reviewed the final draft of the National Cassava Market Assessment Study. The consultancy firm, Agri-Impact, is tasked with making revisions in the document. A final report is expected to be submitted in April 2014.

## Task 1C: Increased production and profitability of the goat value chain

### Producer engagement and sales

#### Goat farmer recruitment:

In the quarter, a total of 1,723 goat farmers in 81 groups in Lofa, Nimba and Bong counties signed MoUs with USAID FED, and are poised to begin building shelters for improved goat production and management. In total, 84 goat groups were targeted for FY14 (Table 12).

Table 12: Goat farmer statistics as of Q2 FY14.

County	FY14 farmer target	# of farmers	Male farmers	Female farmers	Total Goats	Does	Bucks
Nimba	600	563	305	258	766	623	143
Grand Bassa	180	162	106	57	404	317	87
Lofa	400	400	224	176	1,331	949	382
Bong	500	598	457	141	1,781	1,329	389
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,680</b>	<b>1,723</b>	<b>1,092</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>4,219</b>	<b>3,218</b>	<b>1,001</b>

#### Goat sales:

A total of 296 goats were sold this period by USAID FED supported groups in Bong, Nimba and Grand Bassa counties for \$16,095 USD (Table 13).

Table 13: Goat sales in Q2 FY14.

County	# of goat farmer groups	Total # of goats sold	Bucks	Does	Total Value US\$
Bong	6	67	67	-	5,380
Grand Bassa	13	29	23	6	1,820
Lofa	14	148	105	43	5,910
Nimba	21	52	40	12	2,985
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>16,095</b>

### Building farmers' productivity and capacity

#### Goat shelters

In the quarter, USAID FED contracted 23 sawyers to saw wood for the construction of FY14 goat shelters at the various goat production sites in Bong, Lofa, Nimba and Grand Bassa counties. To date, there is enough sawed wood for shelters at eight sites in Bong and Nimba counties.

#### Goat production and herd management training

USAID FED facilitated a goat production and herd management training for 80 farmers (73 male, 7 female) Lead Farmers from Bong, Lofa, Nimba and Grand Bassa counties. The participants learned improved goat production and herd management techniques, and will train other goat farmers in their respective communities with the technical skills.

During the reporting period, one of USAID FED's goat producer groups in Darfuwah-Ta, Bong County ear tagged 35 goats. The ear tagging exercise occurred after the farmers received training on proper record keeping and goat identification.

### **CARI Livestock Quarantine Facility**

During the reporting period, CARI Livestock Quarantine Facility construction was completed. USAID FED also completed a Quarantine Facility Management Guide for CARI to provide strategic guidance on the management needs of such a facility. Activity partner, USDA LOL, plans to import the first shipment of goats in May. The CARI facility has the capacity to shelter 500 animals (Figure 2) and is set to be inaugurated by the U.S. Ambassador in early April.



Figure 2: CARI Quarantine Facility at CARI, Bong County

## **Task 1D: Increased productivity and profitability of the vegetable value chain**

### **Production, harvesting and sales**

During the reporting period, a total of 20 clusters in Montserrado, Margibi, Grand Bassa and Nimba counties carried out land preparation, field layout and nursery construction for the first dry season vegetable production. USAID FED provided each cluster with tools, seeds and fertilizer for the production of high value vegetables for targeted markets (Table 14). The farmers in these clusters will benefit from USAID FED supported dry and wet season vegetable voucher programs. USAID FED also completed the voucher registration and distribution exercise.

Table 14: Vegetable farmers recruited in FY14.

County	# of Clusters	Male	Female	Total	Hectare
Montserrado	6	79	33	112	28
Margibi	8	110	34	144	36
Nimba	4	45	28	73	18.25
Bassa	2	15	10	25	6.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>88.5</b>



Figure 3: Installation of drip irrigation (left) at Gbofella, Margibi Cluster and the distribution of a motorized pump at Low Cost Village, Bensonville.

### Financing Input Supply

During this reporting period, 16 of 20 USAID FED vegetable clusters purchased motorized water pumps through a 50 percent cost share arrangement with USAID FED. USAID FED delivered the motorized pumps to the 16 clusters in Montserrado, Margibi, Nimba and Bassa counties. The water pumps will facilitate irrigation of crops during the dry season (Figure 3).

USAID FED also provided vegetable cluster members' information on the 50 percent cost share arrangement for vegetable solar dryers. USAID FED is prepared to provide 50 percent of the financing for this equipment. Each cluster has selected two carpenters who were taught how to build the dryers and trained on the equipment's use.



Figure 4: Training with PUA clusters in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County in March 2014 on construction and use of solar dryers

USAID FED reached an agreement with cluster members regarding their responsibility in building collection centers. The program will provide each member within the cluster with four plastic crates to use for harvesting their vegetables. The plastic crates represent improved packaging that is expected to result in better handling of the fresh produce and ultimately reduce losses due to compacting and/or bruising. Each cluster selected two female members to serve as the collection center coordinators.



The program procured, distributed and began installing drip irrigation kits in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of irrigation technology in contributing to better yields. The 360 drip irrigation kits were purchased from local input supplier Gro-Green and training took place on the Lead Farmers' fields (Figure 3). All vegetable cluster farmers will receive a drip irrigation kit by the end of April.

### Vegetable Sales

During the period, a total of 11 clusters participating in USAID FED activities reported a harvest of an estimated 11 MT of vegetables from 8 ha of land. The harvests were reportedly sold at the farm gate, as well as at the market for \$12,476 USD (Table 15). USAID FED will be conducting a rapid survey to determine harvest from both the groups supported last year who continue to apply the improved technologies, as well as groups receiving support for the first time this year.

Table 15: Vegetable cluster sales as of Q2 FY14.

Cluster	Area Harvested in ha	Reported Volume Harvested in kg	Reported Sales in USD
Bokays Town	0.46	843.8	728.00
CGCWEP Vegetables clusters	0.53	1,820.5	1,526.00
Central White Plane Cluster	0.54	1,338	521.50
Low Cost Village	0.64	710	983.00
Nyankata Cluster	0.13	333	424.00
Weala Cluster	0.22	1,382.5	1,321.00
Horton Farm	0.14	401	445.00
Mawah Farmers Association	3.76	3,463	5,363.00
Gbofella Cluster	0.06	16	215.00
Kollieman Town Cluster	0.34	246	419.00
Yekepa	1.2	580	531.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11,133</b>	<b>12,476.50</b>

### Improving productivity and capacity

During the reporting period, USAID FED conducted the following training sessions:

- The program trained 49 farmers from seven clusters in Margibi in the layout and transplanting of cayenne pepper, watermelon, lettuce and cucumbers.
- The program trained 23 seedling producers in Grand Bassa county in improved methods of seedling production. In Nimba county, two seedling producers sold 20,510 chili pepper seedlings for \$205 USD.

- The program trained 18 farmers in solar dryer construction and use. The farmers learned how to dry and preserve the cayenne pepper.
- The program, in collaboration with Gro-Green, trained eight Lead Farmers and two Extension Officers from the Low Cost Village Cluster in Montserrado and Gbofella Cluster in Margibi counties on drip irrigation kit installation and management.



Figure 5: Trader Support event at Red Light market near Monrovia.

## Improving access to markets

### Trader support activities

USAID FED conducted two trader support activities (Figure 5) with Lead Farmers and traders/aggregators from Montserrado, Margibi, Nimba and Grand Bassa counties. The activity helps establish a market linkage between PUA clusters and identified markets for the sales of high value vegetables.

The first event of the trader support activity took place at Gopachop market in Red Light with 70 participants (40 male and 30 female), and the second event was held in Ganta, Nimba County with 15

participants (11 males and 4 females). Participants received training on basic record keeping and contracts to help them fully understand relationships with traders and aggregators.

During the second event, the Yekepa Cluster negotiated with Liberian catering firm ROSNA on quality, quantity, prices, procedures, schedules and the consistency expected for a contractual agreement. At the end of the event, both sides agreed to enter into a purchasing contract to formalize the partnership. The contract was completed in March.

## Impact Story

### Yekepa Vegetable Cluster Strikes a Deal with Catering Firm

Sourcing fresh vegetables from Guinea has never been easy for Liberians. Quality is virtually impossible to guarantee, and distances is another issue. Depending on the time of year, deliveries in the West African jungle often struggle over poor roads.

Liberian catering company ROSNA is located in Yekepa, Liberia, near the border with Guinea. Every day of the week, the firm caters meals for mining firm Arcelor Mittal's 800 person staff, and vegetables are a critical part of each meal.

Just to get tomatoes, cucumbers and lettuce, ROSNA's manager, Edwin Sackie spends hours on his cell phone tying together ends with Guinean vegetable farmers.

"It is not easy, because you never know if they are going to arrive or not," Sackie explains, so when he learned of the opportunity to locally source produce from experienced farmers, he put down his cell phone.



Nimba County is one of Liberia's richest agriculture rich areas. Farmers grow vegetables like cucumber, bitter ball, fresh pepper and tomatoes and food staples like cassava, plantain and rice. Some of the produce finds its way to major produce markets in Monrovia, the capital, another part is consumed and the rest goes to the local market.

Vegetable farmers barely eke out a living in Yekepa and place their hopes and dreams in the local market. Unfortunately, with no real infrastructure and logistical challenges, much of the harvest spoils, or 'melts' as they say in local parlance. Farmers rarely work with other farmers or share market information.

The Yekepa Farmers Association is trying to set the precedent. The group of 20 farmers began partnering with the USAID FED in early 2012, and learned hands-on skills in nurseries, planting, bed preparation, field maintenance and ways to bulk their produce. The farmers also learned basic record keeping and managing their farms as a business.

Then, in February 2014, at a trader-farmer support event—designed to increase the understanding of the vegetable value chain amongst participants—the Yekepa Farmers Association entered into a contractual agreement with ROSNA.

Since signing the dotted line, Yekepa farmers have supplied ROSNA with over \$500 USD worth of quality vegetables.

"Now that these farmers are empowered to produce more, it makes sense for us to buy directly here in town," Sackie explains. "We used to order our vegetables from Guinea and Monrovia, but now we can get high quality lettuce, tomatoes and cucumber from right here in Yekepa."

### **Collection centers**

The 20 PUA clusters identified sites for the construction of their collection centers for sorting, grading and marketing of their vegetables. Construction of the centers commenced in March. Each group is expected to provide the material and labor to build the structure while USAID FED provides ledgers, scales, wash tubs and a chalk board to monitor prices.

In addition, USAID FED contracted a horticultural specialist to assess and propose cold chain supply development that is relevant for the current context in Liberia. The consultant visited markets and storage facilities in Montserrado, Margibi, Nimba and Grand Bassa to assess post-harvest handling. A presentation and report have already been submitted to USAID FED for review.

### **Subtask 1.1: Special Studies and MoA Data Collection Systems Development**

In the reporting period, M&E began the Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), a special study which is to help the program make informed decisions on geographic focus, delivery of improved technologies

and enterprise support to program beneficiaries. The study spans all four value chains and is geographically scoped on the four main counties: Bong, Grand Bassa, Lofa and Nimba.

The RRA will categorize lowland rice fields at the same time placing emphasis on mapping and measuring lowland rice fields. Through better mapping, the study will also identify the major production areas for each of the value chains complete with mapping of major markets and estimated inventory maps for buyers. The Appraisal will also identify location and capacity of processing and storage facilities for each value chain in each county as well as other support services. Results from this study will be reported in Quarter 3 as the survey has just been initiated.

Additionally, USAID FED has reviewed the Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Program (LASIP) document and held a series of meetings with the MoA Monitoring and Evaluation Director to review their targets and indicators that overlap with the LASIP document. M&E will consider these indicators for data collection by the Extension Officers who have been trained by USAID FED and report for the MoA.

## **Subtask 1.2: Improve access to agriculture inputs**

### **Seed Multiplication for Rice**

During the reporting period, USAID FED field staff selected the 10 lowland (40 ha) and 12 upland sites (120 ha) for rice seed multiplication in Bong, Lofa and Nimba counties. The 40 ha of lowland and 120 ha of upland have been cleared. In addition, USAID FED received written confirmation of the availability of eight MT of foundation rice seed (2MT Nerica L-19 and 6MT Nerica L-14) from the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAP).

The program vetted eight seed companies for possible future aggregation, processing, distribution and marketing of branded good rice seed of improved varieties adapted to Liberian conditions. In April, USAID FED will select two companies to work with, and assist in the development of business plans to ensure thousands of farmers will have access to quality rice seed on the rural markets.

USAID FED, in collaboration with CARI and the Pan-African rice research organization Africa Rice, kicked off a 10-day certification training for 31 people (24 male, 7 female) on quality seed assurance at CARI facilities in Bong County. The new seed inspectors learned the protocols of seed production including land preparation, fertilization and application, rouging to maintain purity, seed processing, proper seed storage, and seed germination techniques and are expected to apply these skills when working with local rice seed producers in Bong, Nimba and Grand Bassa counties. USAID FED is in the process of working on the administrative aspects of the arrangement.

### **Urea Deep Placement (UDP)**

USAID FED started the identification and selection process of 100 new lowland sites on which to scale up the UDP adaptive research and best practices activities for FY14. To support the activity, the program procured UDP applicators and negotiated a reduction in the price of urea briquettes, cutting the price by half from \$120 to \$60 USD per 50 kg bag

Additionally, FED decided to carry out field research combining the applicable features of the System for Rice Intensification (SRI) with UDP. An STTA from IFDC will prepare the research design in April 2014.

### **Dry Season Vegetable Voucher Program (PUA)**

USAID FED initiated the PUA dry season voucher activity during the quarter. The program linked input supply companies to district level agro dealers, which fulfills the voucher redemption phase of the program. The sale of inputs provides the agro dealers with incentives to meet farmers in their villages, which paves the way for a long-term relationship that should last beyond USAID FED. The program will provide product knowledge and business skills training to the agro dealers participating in the voucher program.

The 20 cluster Lead Farmers and the agro dealers participated in an awareness training session which covered the registration, distribution and redemption processes.

### **Subtask 1.3: Agricultural Extension Support**

#### **ToT for Extension Officers**

USAID FED conducted a Knowledge Gap Assessment and training of Extension Officers, together with their MoA counterparts, working in USAID FED's core counties across rice and cassava value chains. The Knowledge Gap Assessments for rice and cassava EOs were conducted as part of a comprehensive, week-long training for each value chain. The training lasted five days and involved both classroom and practical field activities.

In order to determine technical areas of weakness and address those during training sessions, the program conducted a closed-book exam. At the end of five days, the same exam was administered to determine changes in technical knowledge of the subject value chain. As part of the training, participants were also asked to complete evaluation forms meant to rate the effectiveness of the different methods and modules of the training, as well as the instructors that presented them.



*Figure 6: John Dewalt from the Low Cost vegetable Cluster redeems his voucher for seeds and inputs.*

Results of the gap assessment and the pre and post evaluation of the training are available and can be obtained from the USAID FED office.

A total of 125 Extension Officers participated in the trainings (55 Rice VC, 70 Cassava VC), and 11 percent of the trainees were female.

In addition, the program trained 210 NGO technicians and Lead Farmers from the rice value chain on rice best practices; 9 percent of the participants were women.

#### **Development of training material**

As of Q2 FY14, USAID FED has completed one rice and three cassava training manuals,

completing a total of four of the targeted 11 training manuals for FY14.

## **Component Two: Stimulate Private Sector Growth and Investment**

### **Task 2: Enabling Policy Environment for Private Sector Growth**

#### **Policy Reform Activities**

USAID FED sponsored two policy dialogue sessions with key stakeholders from the MoA, MoCI, MoF, the National Investment Commission (NIC), the World Food Program (WFP), Fabrar Liberia, Inc., Weinco Liberia (agro-input supplier) and five large rice importers, United Commodities Inc. (UCI), Supporting West Africa Trading (SWAT), Fouta Corporation, K&K Trading, and the Fouani Brothers.

Previously, USAID FED Rice Policy Consultant, Dr. Eric Wailes, conducted an economic analysis of the Liberian rice sector in order to 1) develop a plan and timeline for the supply shifting strategy that the GoL can use to support their request for a waiver from the ECOWAS Secretariat in the next three years, after which tariff for rice import can be gradually increased until it harmonizes with the ECOWAS Common External Tariff 2) demonstrate the need for and impact of extending a tax holiday for importation of agriculture inputs (EO #30), and 3) compare the prices of imported rice with the cost of local rice production and farm-gate prices of rice in rural areas.

According to Dr. Wailes, with the right coordination between donors and proper sequencing of policy initiatives, it is possible for Liberia to increase production enough to stabilize its self-sufficiency rating by 2017. MoF stated that there is a plan to reinstate Executive Order #30 but additional information is needed from FED and MoA about the specific terms to be included in the tax waiver. There is no consensus among government agencies on the timeline for the implementation of the rice import tariff to harmonize with the CET.

As part of the policy initiative, USAID FED continued to consult with stakeholders such as MoA, MoCI, MoF, the ECOWAS Commission in Liberia, the Liberian Law Reform Commission (LRC), the Liberian Governance Commission and the private sector. The consultations led to the following milestones:

MoCI is prepared to support the agriculture sector through:

- Import licensing regime that would limit imports of domestically produced food products based on the level of domestic production.
- Implementation of the Government of Liberia's 25 percent local procurement policy, which would include all food products, especially rice and cassava.
- Implementation of the Liberia Innovation Fund that would provide matching grants for small businesses.
- Commitment to include agriculture as a major focus in the 2014 National M/SME Conference to be held in April.
- Partnering with USAID FED to launch the Liberia Agriculture Business Enabling Environment Inter-Agency Policy Group (LABEE IPG) at the

M/SME Conference to move forward on the above-mentioned initiatives (specifically EO#30 and incentives for agri-businesses). The LABEE IPG will consist of key decision makers from each line ministry, donor organizations, key private sector entities, and champions from the Legislature to facilitate moving forward with these initiatives. The LABEE IPG will then assign key technical personnel from their institutions and organizations to be a part of a smaller Technical Working Group (TWG) that will provide technical support and advice to the LABEE IPG.

- Provide an initial market for locally produced and processed rice as part of the 25 percent Local Procurement Policy through procurement of rice for their employee bonus program as early as July 2014.

Major rice importers, such as SWAT and UCI are interested in partnering with USAID FED to invest in agriculture production and processing. During Q2, Component One and Two explored Global Development Alliance (GDA) opportunities with these private sector investors.

### **Seed Certification, Crop Protection Chemical, and Livestock Policy**

During the reporting period, USAID FED collaborated with MoA and WAAPP to determine the next steps in moving forward with a national seed certification policy and the national plant and crop protection chemical policy.

Initially, MoA requested that USAID FED hire a legal consultant to help draft the current policy into legislation for ratification by the legislature. However, through consultations with representatives from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), regional partner organizations such as West Africa Seed Project (WASP) and West Africa Fertilizer Project (WAFP) and WAAPP, it was determined that policies existing at the ECOWAS level simply need to be adopted through publication in the National Gazette (i.e. the policy does not need to be re-created and sent to the legislation process for ratification). There are at least three relevant policies in existence: *Regulation C/REG 4/05/2008 for seed*, *Regulation C/REG 3/05/2008 for pesticides*, and *Regulation C/REG 13/12/12 for fertilizer*.

In April, USAID FED will organize a meeting with the MoA, WAAPP, ECOWAS, USAID and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to confirm that this is the legally acceptable process. Once the policies have been put in the National Gazette, the projects can move forward with the drafting of the implementing guidelines.

In March, USAID FED participated in the launch of the National Livestock Policy Hub hosted by MoA in partnership with the African Union's Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), Reinforcing Veterinary Governance in Africa project (VET-GOV). The launch of this hub is the first of many required to move the National Livestock Policy through the Liberian Legislature.

At the same conference, MoA and AU-IBAR launched the National Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Committee, which will oversee the creation, legislation, promulgation, and implementation of a much broader set of laws dealing with plant and animal health and food safety. It is worth noting that portions of the seed certification, plant and crop protection chemical, and livestock policy are part of the SPS. AU-IBAR is involved in this process to help MoA harmonize its laws and procedures in line with the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP)

and with World Trade Organization (WTO). At the conference, the members discussed policies that are needed and developed draft action plans for each.

### **Assessment of Training Needs and Training for Relevant Government Agencies and Private Sector**

During the reporting period, USAID FED met with MoCI and MoA to determine training needs and policy development support for the two ministries. The MoCI requested assistance with gathering appropriate data to create an import licensing regime that meets international standards, support for their MSME division in agri-business consulting and support for the improvement of the National Standards Laboratory.

The MoA has requested support for the development of their Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) department through the establishment of a Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support Systems node for Liberia, which would help Liberia become compliant with the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) M&E framework of which Liberia is a signatory.

USAID FED decided to carry out a collaborative capacity gap-assessment for MoA in order to determine priority capacity development support. This initiative will be finalized after USAID and the FED teams meet with the Minister of Agriculture in the third week of April.

In addition, USAID FED did preliminary research on previous capacity gap assessments carried out by other projects, donors and independent entities such as the Liberian Governance Commission (LGC) and the USAID-funded Governance and Economic Support Project (GEMS).

### **Public, Private Partnerships (PPP)**

USAID FED drafted and submitted two Global Development Alliance (GDA) concept notes to Chevron and the Coca-Cola Company this period. The GDA proposals to Chevron seek to expand USAID FED's program to commercialize high value vegetables production and sales, and support enterprise development in the Centers of Excellence. Chevron will notify USAID FED by April 28 if the projects are selected.

USAID FED proposed to the Coca-Cola Company a plan to double the program's reach to women farmers through the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) program. The Coca-Cola Company's 5 by 20 Program assists women in starting their own businesses. After the submission of the GDA proposal to the 5 by 20 program, it was determined that funding may not be available to support a true 50/50 cost-share with the company. USAID FED has decided to focus on pursuing PPPs with other potential partners such as the big rice importers, SWAT and UCI, while continuing to keep in touch with Coca-Cola in case funding is made available to support a PPP with USAID FED.

### **2014 National MSME Conference**

The program is providing MoCI with ongoing planning and organizing support for the National MSME Conference 2014 scheduled to take place April 29-30, 2014. USAID FED will use the forum as a mid-year platform to promote/announce current policy issues that affect agri-business. USAID FED will also use the conference to spotlight agri-businesses initiatives and youth involvement in agriculture. USAID FED will host and moderate three break-out sessions dedicated to the agriculture sector, while an additional 9 break-out sessions will be dedicated to more general

MSME topics such as the launching of the National Export Strategy, 25 percent Local Procurement requirement, and impact investing. The two days of the conference will focus on overarching themes of “Access to Finance and Access to Market.”

FED’s break-out sessions will cover the following topics within the Liberian context:

- Youth Opportunities in Agriculture
- Value Chain Financing
- Market Intelligence

In addition, USAID FED will partner with MoCI to host and moderate a closed-door policy dialogue that will launch the Liberia Agriculture Business Enabling Environment Inter-Agency Policy Group (LABEE IPG) to move forward on USAID FED policy initiatives (specifically EO#30 and incentives for agri-businesses, trade integration with ECOWAS and harmonization with the CET). The LABEE IPG will consist of key decision makers from each line Ministry, donor organizations, key private sector entities, and champions from the Legislature to facilitate moving forward with these initiatives.

USAID FED will also be contributing to the conference by:

- Developing at least one value chain promotional video for rice or vegetables, to be displayed on the first day of the conference at the plenary session.
- Supporting 12 agribusiness owners and farmers who are star USAID FED beneficiaries to attend the conference and participate in the break-out sessions.
- Designing 2 booth spaces at the trade fair which will display materials on FED’s four value chains, success stories and investment opportunities.
- Funding support to other direct expenses for the conference such as hall rental, radio talk show, etc.

## **Subtask 2.1: Access to Credit and Business Development Services**

### **Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA)**

During the quarter, USAID FED launched the expansion of the VSLA pilot program to an additional 98 groups (approximately 2,940 youth and women). In order to create a custom VSLA program for agriculture, USAID FED hired five temporary, county-based loan extension agents who will facilitate the roll-out of the new VSLA program. In addition, the access to finance Extension Officers will assist traders, processors and agro dealers with financing needs by linking them to MFIs, and where appropriate, to banks.

Under the new VSLA activity USAID FED has completed the following:

- Assisted in the development of a USAID FED-specific VSLA curriculum.
- Recruited 20 community-based facilitation officers (CFOs) in the six counties and conducted a five-day VSLA ToT.
- Completed the awareness phase in the six counties and signed MoUs with 96 of the 98 groups.

To date, VSLA members have provided each other \$57,086 USD in small loans. The 26 VSLA groups are located in six counties and began saving and lending activities in November 2013.

USAID Food and Enterprise Development Program for Liberia  
Quarterly Report, January - March 2014

Between the months of November and March, the 26 groups have grown membership from 627 to 705 members, saved \$46,389 USD, and administered 1,231 loans (Table 16).

Table 16: VSLA group results for Q2 FY14.

Date (FY14)	# of Groups	# of Active Members*	Shares Purchased (\$USD)	Total Loans (\$USD)	Interest Recorded (\$USD)	# of Loans
Nov-Dec	26	627	\$18,516	\$16,966	\$1,547	443
Jan	26	642	\$6,789	\$9,331	\$933	243
Feb	26	701	\$10,111	\$17,742	\$1,725	286
Mar	26	705	\$10,972	\$12,048	\$1,453	259
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>\$46,389</b>	<b>\$56,086</b>	<b>\$5,658</b>	<b>1,231</b>
*Total # of registered members is currently 711. Active members are counted when they regularly attend meetings and add to savings pool.						

VSLA members reported utilizing loans for agriculture activities such as hiring labor to brush and maintain fields, purchasing seeds, agro-chemicals and tools, and for transporting goods to the market. Over 65 percent of total loans were used towards agriculture activities (Table 17).

The VSLA program includes mentorship in group leadership, gender mainstreaming, and record keeping over a nine month period until the groups' final payout (disbursement of savings and accrued interest) in July 2014. USAID FED estimates that the 26 groups will generate a total of \$185K in ag-related loans for the farmers at a 15.65 percent annual return for the savings group over a three year period. The work plan estimate for agriculture-related loans in year one of the pilot was \$26,000, which has already been exceeded (Table 17).

Table 17: VSLA ag-loans versus non ag-loans as of Q2 FY14.

Date	Ag-Loans (\$USD)	Non-Ag Loans (\$USD)	Total Loans (\$USD)	# Ag-Loans	# Non-Ag Loans	# of Total Loans
Nov-Dec	\$10,542	\$6,192	\$16,966	279	164	443
Jan	\$5,826	\$3,421	\$9,331	153	90	243
Feb	\$11,375	\$6,682	\$17,742	180	106	286
Mar	\$8,908	\$3,140	\$12,048	196	63	259
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$36,651</b>	<b>\$19,435</b>	<b>\$56,086</b>	<b>808</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>1,231</b>

## Impact Story

### Widow Uses Small Village Loans to Expand Her Peanut Farm

USAID Food and Enterprise Development Program for Liberia  
Quarterly Report, January - March 2014





*Figure 7: Kormassah Boi, a widowed peanut farmer.*

Kormassah Boi is a widow with ten children living in David Selma Town in rural Liberia. More than a decade ago during the country's civil war, soldiers came into her village and killed her husband leaving her to raise the children and take care of the family farm on her own. Soon her house began to fall apart and the prospect of utter destitution loomed. She turned to her community and farming (Figure 6).

In 2013, she joined the Zeela Farmers Association, a group consisting of 50 men, women and several widows. Each member also has his or her own farmland, and as a group the farmers cultivate two

hectares of lowland rice.

In addition to rice, Kormassah plants a small area of peanuts to sell in local markets. Her peanut farm produces most of her income, on average 5,000 Liberian dollars (\$62 USD) monthly, and she uses the rice to feed her children. Kormassah always knew she had enough experience to maintain a successful farm, but with no capital, it was difficult for her to expand beyond subsistence farming.

"Many of our members have lost their men to war and disease. In the past, the men were expected to prepare the land for the rice. We see a lot of overgrown swamps and no means to make it ready for farming," she explains.

When the Zeela Farmers Association partnered with the USAID Food and Enterprise Development (FED) Program to increase their group's rice production, she and other women also got the chance to start a village savings and loan group. Through the savings fund, the 30 women found a way to loan to each other small amounts of capital and increase their own agriculture activities. The savings and loan group is part of USAID FED's strategy to increase access to finance for Liberian farmers.

The program also provided the farmers with agriculture training specifically focused on rice nursery, transplanting and harvesting techniques, while program staff mentored Kormassah in establishing a small business.

In November, Kormassah took a loan for 20,000 Liberian dollars (\$250 USD) and used the money to pay local laborers to prepare the land for her rice and peanut farms and to buy 50 kg of peanut seeds. In three months she made enough from the peanut profits to pay back the loan with 10 percent interest.

"If you want to make a big farm work, you got to pay the people to help you. On farms as big as mine, you need labor. As a widow, I can't do the work alone and expect to make much income. I know how to manage the money and hope for the best."

In early 2014, Kormassah took a second loan for 160,000 Liberian dollars (\$2000 USD) and purchased tools for her expanded farm. She also traveled to neighboring Guinea to

purchase 150 kg of peanut seeds. She came back and began selling peanut seeds which provided her community quick access to quality seeds.

By the time Kormassah was ready to take her second loan, the village savings and loan fund had reached 500,000 Liberian dollars, had made over 50 successful loans, and generated over 50,000 Liberian dollars in interest income.

In June 2014, the members will pay out to each member their portion of the savings, providing a considerable sum of money to be used towards improving their lives, paying school fees and expanding their farms. Kormassah plans to fix her home and send her older children to a vocational training school while keeping the youngest children enrolled in grade school.

### **Micro Finance for Farmers**

In the first quarter, Liberia Entrepreneurial & Asset Development (LEAD), a local microfinance institute (MFI), signed loan agreements totaling \$1,630,000 LD (\$20,375 USD) for individual vegetable farmers in Montserrado and Margibi who were part of FY2013 demonstration plots. The groups include:

○ United Farmers Association (UFA)	for \$250,000 LD (\$3,125 USD)
○ Money in the Bush	for \$180,000 LD (\$2,250 USD)
○ Welekema Farmers Association	for \$150,000 LD (\$1,875 USD)
○ Kukatonon	for \$150,000 LD (\$1,875 USD)
○ Kuwikai	for \$150,000 LD (\$1,875 USD)
○ Menlehkoyee	for \$234,375 LD (\$3,125 USD)
○ Zoedoar	for \$468,750 LD (\$6,250 USD)

In March, the UFA farmers made their first loan payment totaling 104,000 Liberian dollars (\$1,300 USD). UFA members used the loan to purchase inputs and pay laborers to expand their farms to grow cucumber, cabbage, bitterball and pepper. Several members engaged in group farming took out a loan for 15,350 Liberian dollars (\$192 USD) and sold their vegetables for 47,500 Liberian dollars (\$593 USD ), enabling them to pay off their entire loan and interest of \$18,200 Liberian dollars (\$228 USD).

The farming groups that received loans have until the end of April to repay their outstanding loan balances. In March, LEAD issued loans totaling \$650 USD to four vegetable farming groups to help them purchase motorized water pumps (*See Task 1D*).

USAID FED is collaborating with the United States African Development Foundation (USADF) in helping LEAD succeed in its microfinance business in order to provide sustainable access to finance for farmers in the rural areas. USADF has announced that they are prepared to grant LEAD up to \$250,000 USD to expand the agriculture lending program. The issuing of the new grant is contingent upon LEAD's application and final reporting on the current grant. In the meantime, the program is working with USAID FED's county managers to locate prospective participants for another tranche of loans.

## Impact Story

### Small Amounts of Financing Earn Big Rewards for Vegetable Farmers

Johnson Harris of the United Farmers Association can tell you something about the importance of timing. He bought cabbage seeds back in August 2013 several months before Liberia's best cabbage growing season around December. When it came time to plant, he held an advantage over his fellow farmers who at the time couldn't afford the better cabbage seeds.

"By the time we were planting, the good seeds were gone. The problem is that the other farmers didn't have money to buy the good seeds when they were available. Sometimes there's no money. Every farmer has a family," says Harris.

Harris, who studies agriculture at the University of Liberia, harvested 60 bags of cabbage in January 2014 and sold each 50 kg bag at the local market for 3,500 Liberian dollars (\$44 USD). The following week, he sold 27 bags of cabbage leaves for 1,500 Liberian dollars (\$19 USD) each. His colleagues' cabbage crops did not come up.

Johnson Harris's cabbage seeds were helpful, but he did not do it all on his own. With only a small amount of financing, Harris and his fellow farmers have vastly improved their harvests and, as a result, their income (Figure 8).



*Figure 8: Johnson Harris stands next to a laborer he pays to harvest peppers.*

The United Farmers Association is comprised of 13 farmers who grow vegetables outside of Barnesville in Montserrado County. Each farmer typically farms one to two hectares, and as a group, they plant a one-hectare plot. In 2013, the United Farmers Association partnered with USAID FED Program for Liberia to boost vegetable production and increase the farmers' ability to link with local markets.

USAID FED experts worked with the farmers to improve field layouts, planting and irrigation techniques and provided the farmers with tools and seeds. However, the real catalyst came in October

2013 when USAID FED and local microfinance institution Liberian Entrepreneurial & Asset Development (LEAD) loaned the group 250,000 Liberian dollars (\$3,125 USD). It was the first time any of the farmers had ever been offered a loan.

The loan was made possible through Liberia's Central Bank and funds from the United States African Development Foundation (USADF). These funds have allowed LEAD to expand their loan pool and assist USAID FED farmers.

Every farmer in the group used the loan to purchase pesticides. Some purchased manure from a slaughterhouse located in Monrovia, while others bought chemical fertilizers at the market. As a group, the farmers used a portion of the loan to

upgrade their farming tool kit with new water hose, watering cans, spray cans and machetes.

Perhaps most important, each farmer could afford to pay laborers to help them work the fields. Additional labor in field preparation, including clearing and plowing by hand, allowed the farmers to plant larger areas. Laborers also assisted the farmers with transplanting seedlings, watering, weeding and ultimately harvesting.

“I doubled the size of my field with the loan. Before I had to do all work myself and get my children to help me,” says Daniel Kollie, another member of United Farmers Association.

With inputs and a larger area, Kollie harvested 3 bags of pepper and sold them for 6000 Liberian dollars (\$75 USD) each. In January, he harvested 14 bags of cucumber, which he sold for 2,500 Liberian dollars (\$31 USD) each, essentially doubling his usual income.

Harris and Kollie have since paid back their portion of the loan. Thanks to successful harvests, the other members too have made repayments on the loan. In April, the group will repay the loan in full, and their resulting new credit history will enable them to increase the size of the next loan for the upcoming rainy season crops.

### **Business Training and Mentorship to Access Finance**

During this reporting period, USAID FED met with USAID Investing in Business Expansion (IBEX) project to coordinate efforts to deliver training and mentorship services to MSMEs on accessing credit. IBEX agreed to begin with training the USAID FED’s 26 VSLA groups from FY13. Once they are registered with the Central Bank, these groups may be eligible for low-interest loans to expand their loan pools. Micro-enterprises, which started with the help of VSLA loans and wish to expand, could also qualify for commercial loans. USAID FED and IBEX will create customized training and mentorship modules for the VSLA groups. Other stakeholders in the value chain such as processors, aggregators and traders may also benefit from the program.

## **Component Three: Build local technical and managerial human resource capability**

### **Task 3.0 Develop Existing Vocational Centers into Centers of Excellence**

USAID FED hired June Lavelle as the interim Component 3 Team Leader until the long term Vocational Training and Non-Formal Education Specialist position can be filled.

USAID FED also hired a Vocational Agribusiness Education Officer (VAEO) for Lofa County Community College (LCCC). The hiring of the VAEO for Grand Bassa Community College (GBCC) has been postponed until the third quarter when the GBCC is expected to relocate to its new campus in Paynesberry. The VAEO is tasked to provide support in the implementation of the program’s activities at the community colleges and Booker Washington Institute.

## **The National Diploma Curriculum for Agriculture**

Throughout FY14 Q2, USAID FED and STTAs, Dr. Bradley Leger and Cristina Caltagirone, participated in numerous meetings with the MoE's Director of Technical Vocational Education and Training, Saku Dukuly, to provide technical assistance to help move the process of rolling out the National Diploma for Agriculture (NDA) curriculum. In March, USAID FED sponsored a one-day NDA curriculum review workshop to revise the NDA structure. Workshop participants analyzed the courses and the division between practical activities and theoretical content. In addition, faculty from the NCCC presented the results of the six courses they piloted during the first semester of 2013-14.

Major inputs include the integration of gender, environment, traditional farm knowledge, and industry alignment in relevant courses. It was decided that the additional mathematics and statistics courses were too advanced for the NDA and were subsequently removed. It was also decided that Physical Education (P.E.) and Reserved Officers Training Corps (ROTC) are not necessary and will no longer be included in the NDA. The MoE will address the NDA draft curriculum in terms of course credits, accreditation, and the transferability of the diploma credits towards higher education, while ECOWAS will have to review the finalized curriculum to ensure that it meets the regional TVET standards.

The workshop was attended by 21 representatives from key stakeholder institutions including the MoE, MoCI, National Commission on Higher Education, FAO, WFP, the 4-H Club Liberia and key faculty from the Departments of Agriculture of BWI, LCCC, NCCC and GBCC.

Curriculum piloting is underway at the Nimba County Community College where students are testing a total of eight courses including Agri-Business and Soil Fertility & Crop Nutrition. After the two-year program is rolled out at the Centers of Excellence, lessons learned and best practices will be consolidated to guide the expansion of the curriculum to four more vocational training centers in Liberia under the MoE in 2016.

## **Support Library and Agriculture Departments with ICT at CEAs**

### **Nimba County Community College**

USAID FED configured and delivered 13 desktop and three laptop computers to NCCC along with three projectors, one large screen and office furniture. The installation of the V-Sat Internet networking equipment was also completed at the library. The network still needs to be completed for the Agriculture Department and Career Resource & Internship Center.

### **Lofa County Community College**

Renovations at LCCC continued with completion of the admissions office, agriculture department teachers' lounge, library and study rooms, the computer server room and IT office. Work on the Career Resource and Internship Center and the Department of Agriculture's finance and administration office is almost complete. The cabling for the VSAT is currently on hold until the CoE for Vocational Agriculture Education has completed its business plan. The business plan will identify the sources of revenue available to cover the costs of operations, especially the cost of internet connectivity (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Study room (left) and library shown here with textbooks and furniture at the LCCC.

### **Grand Bassa Community College**

The GBCC eventual move to the Paynesberry campus has been stalled because the construction assessment was delayed. This has pushed back the program's plan to establish the physical facilities to support the development of the GBCCC as Center of Excellence for Vocational Agriculture Education. The move is expected to be finished before the end of June 2014.

### **Booker T. Washington Institute**

USAID FED completed the installation of equipment after installing three overhead ceiling fans. USAID FED is now studying the next steps, in collaboration with USAID Liberia Energy Sector Support Project (LESSP), for the possibility of providing an alternative power source for the Agriculture Department. USAID FED initiated the survey during this quarter, and expects LESSP to finish the assessment in the third quarter.

The cost of generating electricity is a major factor related to the sustainability of the CEAs. USAID FED prepared a scope of work for an electrical engineer to assess all of the Agriculture Department's generators and their fuel consumption. With this information, the program will develop a cost-benefit analysis for potentially switching to a renewable energy source to provide electrical power for lighting, computers and projection equipment which have been or will be installed at each of the USAID FED supported Centers of Excellence. This assessment will feed into the feasibility analysis being coordinated with LESSP.

### **Agriculture Science Laboratories at CoEs**

With the assistance of partner Louisiana State University, the equipment has been procured for the CoEs agricultural science laboratories. In the coming quarter, the program will recruit a local science laboratory specialist to assist with construction and lay out of the laboratories. Using the recommended equipment list, the team will assess the facilities designated by the CoEs to ensure they can accommodate such a laboratory. The assessment team will develop a cost estimate for the renovation of the facilities, paying particular attention to the electrical and clean water supply requirements.



## Demonstration Farms on Improved Technology and Production Practices

### Booker T. Washington Institute



Figure 10: Drip irrigation demonstration at BWI.

- USAID FED worked with BWI's student leadership group, the Future Farmers Association, to expand the organic vegetable production and drip irrigation demonstration site (Figure 10) and conducted practical trainings on setting-up and managing a drip irrigation system. There was a total of 103 participants comprised of: 89 students (52 male, 37 female), 8 faculty participants (5 male, 3 female) and 6 residents (3 male, 3 female).

- Approximately 25 kg of seed rice harvested from the first planting will be used at the BWI demonstration site. Half of the 1.2 ha lowland paddy rice field, which was cultivated in 2013, will be planted this year for student demonstration purposes.

- In March, regular agriculture high school students and students from the Advanced Vocational Training Program began clearing 4.5 ha

for cassava production in anticipation of funding from the West African Agricultural Productivity Project (WAAPP), which will assist BWI with its farm development and post-harvest processing activities.

- BWI's responsibilities under the WAAPP agreement will be to provide the land and labor while WAAPP provides farming inputs such as hand tools and the cassava processors. The project aims to enable the students to understand the importance of cassava in contributing to food security. It also introduces students to best practices in cassava production, post-harvest handling, and processing. Additionally, it serves as an income generating arm for the Department of Agriculture production unit.

### NCCC

- During the quarter, 228 agriculture students began brushing 0.5 ha to expand NCCC's lowland rice production during the upcoming planting season to 2.35 ha. The community farmers who were involved in the planting and harvesting of the first crop were operating under a provisional crop-sharing agreement in which they were to receive 90 percent of the crop and NCCC was to receive 10 percent. However, NCCC's board has terminated the agreement. The farmers' group harvested 3.5 MT of seed rice from the combined total of the 1.85 ha.
- The community farmers working at the site have consumed 1,400kg during their work period (28 50 kg bags valued at \$980 USD) and sold 40 50 kg bags at \$35 USD per bag to the NCCC Administration for \$1,400 USD. The farmers saved two bags of rice seed for next season's planting. NCCC retained no monies from the sales.
- The certified seed multiplication site, described above, produced a relatively low yield and the Production Pond #1 did not yield at all, primarily due to the late arrival of certified

USAID Food and Enterprise Development Program for Liberia

Quarterly Report, January - March 2014

seeds which resulted in late planting. In addition, during the milking stage, the water table in both sites dropped considerably due to the lack of rain fall, and the rice that was planted in Production Pond #1 never came up. The intention is to replant rice in the pond in the coming season.



Figure 11: The arid cassava field at KRTTI.

- When the NCCC decided to turn the cassava field into a football field, the students had to prematurely harvest approximately 90 percent of the cassava on 0.7 ha. In the current semester (February to June) NCCC is targeting 3.4 ha for cassava production. The number of students participating in the activity has grown from 46 to 76 students.

- The remaining cassava fields (approximately 1.8 ha) are ready for harvest, which was delayed until the NCCC opens its canteen. The NCCC canteen will use the cassava to feed

students and faculty, and the NCCC has already paid farmers \$700 USD for the crop that is still in the ground. The community farmers and students have cleared an additional 1.8 ha behind the compost building for cassava. The community farmers are continuing to operate under a crop-sharing arrangement that has not been formalized. The plots have all been planted at different times over the past year.

- A one hectare site was designated for vegetable production and prepared by the 36 community farmers. The faculty requested seeds from USAID FED, and planting is expected to commence in early April. The drip irrigation specialist assigned to NCCC has been trained at BWI on this technique and is waiting the delivery of the irrigation equipment in order to set-up the demonstration on NCCC's vegetable plot.
- The NCCC selected a one acre site to establish the goat-raising demonstration, which was equipped with a fence constructed from live trees in order to attach a wire mesh. A budget is currently being prepared for this activity which is expected to get under way in the third quarter.
- USAID FED is preparing a knowledge sharing activity to bring NCCC faculty to BWI to learn from the latter's commercial composting operation. The wood chipper for NCCC's composting operation is currently under procurement in the United States.

### **LCCC Demonstration Sites**

- Ongoing preparation of the 3 ha lowland rice demonstration site.
- The LCCC intends to devote 3 ha to cassava production but is still trying to obtain land from the county authorities.
- The LCCC would like to devote one hectare to vegetable production but is still trying to obtain a suitable site from the county authorities.
- The LCCC has decided to utilize 1 ha behind the LCCC campus to raise goats.

### **GBCCC Demonstration Sites**

USAID FED is recommending the establishment of greenhouse vegetable demonstration farm adjacent to the Paynesberry campus as an option. GBCCC is trying to acquire 30 acres from the



community near Big Joe Town to set up its first demonstration farms, as well as rice mill and cassava processing operations. However, the community is requesting \$25,000 USD for the land. The GBCCC Board will now consider another venue close to the Paynesberry Campus.

### **Kakata Rural Teachers Training Institute (KRTTI)**

USAID FED's VAE0 observed that KRTTI's cassava plants appear to be suffering due to the lack of water in the area (Figure 11 above). The MoU with KRTTI stipulates that USAID FED will provide essential garden tools, seeds, and fertilizer for the preparation of a two ha cassava plot and a one ha vegetable plot. Labor and all other inputs were to be provided by KRTTI. It turns out KRTTI is suffering from lack of finances. They had to reduce their number of staff from 12 to four people. This has resulted in poor maintenance of the plots. This is aggravated by a lack of water source for irrigation.

### **Career, Resource and Internship Centers at CoEs**

#### **CoE Teacher and Student Capacity Building for Leadership Development**

In February, USAID FED conducted two workshops on integrating instruction, leadership and service learning. Seven agriculture teachers from the four CoEs and seven agriculture student organization leaders from the NCCC received knowledge on leadership and service learning.

### **Booker T. Washington Institute**

During the quarter, the membership of a vocational agribusiness education student leadership association, The Future Farmers Association (FFA) of BWI, grew to a total membership of 125 students. The club's main objective is to make a positive difference in the lives of agriculture students by developing their potential for leadership, personal growth and career success through agriculture education (Figure 12).



*Figure 12: The Future Farmers Association (FFA) leadership team planning the installation event.*

During the quarter, the students prepared a plan for the installation of the FFA interim leadership in May. The project expects that elected student leaders from schools in Kakata, such as the Cuttington Junior College's Agriculture College and the Lango Lappay High School will be invited.

### **Nimba County Community College**

At the strategic planning session at NCCC in March, the Administration and faculty from the Agriculture Departments identified thirteen individuals interested in sitting on the CoE's advisory board. USAID FED staff worked with NCCC on plans for their up-coming Career Day which is scheduled for April 25<sup>th</sup>.

### **Community Outreach Program and Community-Based Farming Activities**

#### **Youth-owned Social Enterprise for Organic Waste Collection and Composting**

USAID FED's STTA Senior Business and Capacity Development Expert is assisting Green Coast Agricultural Program (GCAP) in the preparation of its business concept and plan for inclusion in its

USAID Food and Enterprise Development Program for Liberia  
Quarterly Report, January - March 2014

application for the 40 Chances Fellows Program. The business concept is a social enterprise that will collect and compost organic waste in the city of Kakata. Under this plan, the compost will be marketed to surrounding farmers to improve the production of vegetables.

The 40 Chances Fellows Program is sponsored by the Howard G. Buffet Foundation in cooperation with Tony Blair's Africa Governance Initiative and the World Food Prize. Fellows will receive \$80,000 USD in start-up funds and \$70,000 USD for living and transportation expenses for one year. In addition to working with USAID FED on the business concept, five representatives from GCAP will be participating in the five day Commercial Farm and Agri-business Training, which will be conducted at the BWI Center of Excellence in the first week of April.

### **GDA for Community Kitchen Incubators at the CoEs**

USAID FED submitted a proposal for \$1.584 million USD to the Chevron Liberia Economic Development program for a Global Development Alliance grant to establish Community Kitchen Incubator programs at the CEAs. The establishment of Community Kitchen Incubators will address the multi-level challenges of increasing food and nutrition security, as well as driving new business formation in the agro-food sector by teaching agricultural students and community residents how to safely preserve, process, package, market and sell processed food products in higher-value consumer and wholesale markets.

The kitchens will also serve as food service canteens for each of the campuses, which currently have a combined population of 4,813 students and faculty. Should the submission make it through the pre-proposal stage, USAID FED will work with each of the CoEs in the development of sub-proposals which will be rolled into the full proposal to Chevron.

### **Capacity Development and Business Plans to Ensure Funding to Sustain CoEs**

In February and March, USAID FED conducted three workshops to train 41 administrators from the four partner institutions, as well as staff involved in the formulation of strategies, to generate revenue from indirect funding and earned income to ensure the sustainable operations of the facilities and equipment that USAID FED has put in place at the CoEs. The most notable outcomes of the workshops were: the development of vision, mission and values statements for each of the CoEs, the identification of critical issues that need to be addressed for the CoEs to move forward with the development of their sustainability plans, and the prioritization of enterprises upon which their business plans focus.

USAID FED prepared training materials for an intensive five-day Planning a Commercial Farm or Agri-business ToT program. There are two sessions scheduled at each CoE during the months of April and May.

### **Student and Faculty Immersion in Successful Vocational Education Programs in the US**

During the reporting period, USAID FED reviewed this activity and proposed a CoE faculty exchange program to Ghana instead of the United States. The exchange program to Ghana is more affordable, and will permit more Liberian faculty to travel at the same cost of sending far less faculty to the United States. Secondly, Ghana's agriculture institutions are technically more relevant to Liberia since the West Africa region shares similar ECOWAS curriculum, and there are more agricultural ecological and socio-economic similarities. The USAID FED team is confident that a

USAID Food and Enterprise Development Program for Liberia

Quarterly Report, January - March 2014

regional training opportunity for CoE staff is a better investment both in terms of cost and actual faculty outputs.

### **Support Agriculture Graduates in Post-Graduate Studies**

USAID FED is assisting four Liberian graduate students in capitalizing on an opportunity to study Plant Pathology with a focus on rice and vegetables, Soil Science and/or Livestock in the United States at USAID FED partner universities, Louisiana State University and the University of Arkansas.

Mr. Randolph Kolleh, a graduate of University of Cuttington, has applied to the University of Arkansas to study plant pathology. USAID FED is offering up to \$10,000 USD for each student provided they fulfill one year of research work after returning to Liberia. The tuition, accommodations and other relevant expenses are covered through the assistantships from the partner universities. Mr. Kolleh, along with two other candidates from University of Liberia, took the Graduate Records Examination (GRE) in March.

### **Task 3.1 Enterprise Service Centers**

#### **Conduct search for ESC investors and additional research on other business development services**

USAID FED issued a Request for Expressions of Interest to pre-qualify potential investors for the establishment of Enterprise Service Centers (ESC) in Bong, Grand Bassa, Lofa and Nimba counties. The following enterprise services have the greatest potential to address the most critical constraints to the development and formalization of commercial farming and agriculture-based service enterprise on a financially self-sustaining basis. The enterprise services include:

- Tractor-hire services (especially transport services).
- Mobile video training.
- Mobile classroom training & advisory services.
- Market information services.

Once the selection of pre-qualified candidates has been made, they will proceed to the next round of proposals. Pre-qualification of candidates will be completed in May 2014.

## **Component Four: Cross-cutting Activities**

### **Task 4.1 Gender**

USAID FED facilitated a ToT on Gender Awareness in Bong, Nimba and Grand Bassa counties for MoA and Program Extension Officers. The workshop provided the officers with the knowledge and skills to ensure gender equality in all agriculture extension activities. Participants included:

- Bong, 19 Extension Officers (15 male, 4 female)
- Nimba, 9 Extension Officers (all male)
- Grand Bassa, 7 Extension Officers (6 male, 1 female)

The program conducted Gender Equality and Awareness training for four USAID FED Extension Officers, and 51 group leaders and Lead Farmers, as part of the Improved Water Management

Training in the rice value chain. The same training was conducted for 25 leaders from USAID FED's 26 FY13 VSLA groups. The participants learned how to ensure that gender related issues are addressed during implementation of these activities.

### **Leadership and Business Incubation for Women Entrepreneurs**

USAID FED designed the Leadership and Business Incubation program for Women Entrepreneurs, which aims to address two critical constraints facing women: lower human capital (leadership and business skills) and less access to networks and information. The project will use a combined capacity development approach through basic leadership and business skills training, followed by mentorship and a virtual business incubation.

USAID FED aims to support 50 women already engaged in activities across the four value chains, such as the rice business hubs and New Generational Women, in the six counties in order to strengthen their skills, as well as those of the organizations in which they operate. However, USAID FED will not exclude women who are not currently program beneficiaries if they meet the criteria and provide a support service for the value chains. The program's Phase I will begin in May and end in August 2014.

## **Task 4.2 Youth**

### **Back to School Garden Program**

During the quarter, USAID FED and partners participated in The Back to School Garden Program Awards Ceremony (Figure 13) to honor over 2,500 youth farmers from 20 schools in Grand Bassa county. The ceremony also awarded the top three school garden groups with cash prizes to be used towards expanding their gardens. Participating youth clubs included 10 conventional schools and 10 Alternative Basic Education sites in Grand Bassa county. Over the previous nine months, the youth farmers applied the acquired skills and knowledge to their own gardens by focusing on cassava and vegetables.

The Back to School program aims to generate youth interest in agriculture and other businesses supporting agriculture. This activity illustrates USAID FED's broad network of partners ranging from government ministries and other USAID programs, to Liberian civil society and schools. The partners plan to replicate the activity in other counties in FY14.



Figure 13: From L to R Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports, Advancing Youth Project, FED, USAID Deputy Mission Director, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Student Gardener.

### **National Agriculture Volunteers:**

During this period, USAID FED and UNICEF/MOYS assigned 28 National Agriculture Volunteers to mentor 148 Advancing Youth Project (AYP) agriculture youth clubs at 148 schools in Bong, Margibi, Nimba, Lofa and Montserrado counties. AYP's youth clubs consist of adult learners who have gone back to school. Gardeners at the 148 selected sites have completed clearing land, destumping, nursery preparation, and field layout for cassava and vegetables production.

Additionally, USAID FED and AYP organized a county alliance meeting this quarter with the four youth extension agents assigned in Bong, Lofa, Nimba and Grand Bassa counties. During the meeting, all parties agreed to work closely with school administrations and Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) to improve ownership of the school garden program and present progress activity reports at every quarterly meeting.

### **Local Youth NGO Engagement**

USAID FED hired four local Youth Agriculture NGOs to provide extension support alongside the 39 youth extension aids, whose job it is to monitor and support kuu leaders and Lead Farmers from the cassava and upland rice value chains in the application of improved technology.

### **Task 4.3: Nutrition**

338 individuals (301 male, 37 female) received nutrition messages through nine training workshops conducted across the four value chains (Table 18). The messages focus on dietary diversification. An example of mainstreaming nutrition messages is as follows:

#### **Key messages in trainings under the rice value chain**

- Energy foods help us produce the power/strength we need to work on the farm, run and plays.
- Energy foods are foods rich in carbohydrates/starch, fat and sugar.

USAID Food and Enterprise Development Program for Liberia  
Quarterly Report, January - March 2014

- Energy foods give our body power and heat and make us active.
- Energy foods are like gasoline for a car and wood for a fire.

Foods that have carbohydrate are: rice, cassava, plantain, eddo, yam, and sweet potatoes. Foods that have fat are: coconut, argo oil, red palm oil, fat from animals and ground nuts

#### Diversified diet:

- Rice + goat meat + vegetables = (diversify diet)
- Beans + rice + fruits= (diversify diet)
- Wheat+ beans + oil = (diversify diet)
- Our traditional soups and rice are mixed foods!
- Big belly ma, eat one extra bowl of rice with different types of food every day to get vitamins and be healthy, active and happy to born a strong baby.
- Baby ma, when you are giving tay tay, eat two extra bowls of rice with different types of colorful foods such as meat, cassava leaf and other green leafy vegetables, peanuts, and pumpkin a day to maintain your health and the health of your baby.
- Husband, make sure that your wife with a big belly has one extra bowl of rice with different types of food every day to be healthy, active, and happy, and to born a strong baby.

Table 18: Nutrition messaging in USAID FED training as of Q2 FY14.

VC	Training Title	Category of Participant	# of individuals that received nutrition messages.				
			F	M	Total		
Rice	Rice Production and Best Practices ToT Workshop	Lead Farmers	8	67	75	338	2,000
Rice	Rice Production and Best Practices ToT Workshop	Lead Farmers	2	50	52		
Rice	Improved Water Management Infrastructures	Lead Farmers	14	40	54		
VSLA	VSLA Methodology	Community Field Officers	2	18	20		
Rice	Rice Production and Best Practices ToT Workshop	Lowland Lead Farmers	1	33	34		
Goat	Goat Production and Herd Management	Goat producer Lead Farmers	2	18	20		
	Rice Production and	Lowland Lead	8	41	49		

<b>Rice</b>	Best Practices ToT Workshop	Farmers					
<b>Goat</b>	Goat Production and Herd Management	Goat producer Lead Farmers	0	25	25		
<b>Goat</b>	Goat Production and Herd Management	Goat producer Lead Farmers	0	9	9		
<b>Total</b>			<b>37</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>338</b>		

#### Task 4.4. Coordination with Partners

The Rice Policy Dialogue event gathered the country's most important rice stakeholders from government agencies, international donors, civil society and the private sector. The event was attended by 42 representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Investment Commission, USAID, the World Food Program, Wienco, Fabrar Rice, West Africa Venture Fund, the European Union, Supporting West Africa Trade (SWAT), United Commodities, Inc., Fouta Corporation, Fouani Brothers, and K&K Trading.

USAID FED worked with the Ministry of Finance, Bureau of Customs and Excise to quantify the number of waivers that have been granted in the agricultural sector under Executive Order #30. USAID FED compiled a list of Harmonized System Codes (HS) specific to the agricultural sector, to be used to compile the data, which is currently being vetted by the MoA. The HS is an internationally standardized system of classifying traded products. FED expects to finalize the EO #30 waiver data in March.

In addition, USAID FED partner IBEX has coordinated efforts to deliver business-related training and mentorship on accessing credit for micro and small agri-businesses. USAID FED and IBEX will begin by focusing on USAID FED's already trained and proven 26 VSLA groups, which have been generating revenues through loans since the beginning of FY14. If IBEX and USAID FED can assist these groups with registering with the Central Bank, they may be eligible for low interest loans to expand their funds.

#### Task 4.5 Environmental Compliance

USAID FED is supporting Fabrar Liberia with a biomass generator, Lister engine, as support to powering its rice mill operation in Kakata, Margibi County. During the reporting period, USAID FED worked with LESSP to obtain clarity on the legal requirements needed to procure and operate a biomass generator.

USAID FED obtained from the Liberia Environment Protection Agency a list of accredited firms for processing of permits for any entity intending to construct and operate a processing center as well as power generation business. It was clarified that Fabrar should obtain the permit, but USAID FED will provide funding support for the hiring of a consultant firm for the processing of the permit. In the meantime, USAID FED will prepare an amendment to its IEE in compliance with USAID's regulations.

USAID FED visited the five rice water management sites during this period. The project remains resolved on the Reg. 216 requirement, and will undertake to ensure that no un-degraded lowland or uplands landscape is introduced in the USAID FED project.

-End of report-